

For Immediate Release – December 2, 2015

Department of Economic and  
Community Development



## **State Partners with Massachusetts Arts Museum to Serve Rural Connecticut Artists**

(Hartford, CT) The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is collaborating with The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) and several other arts organizations to bring a program that helps artist-entrepreneurs in Massachusetts to Connecticut.

DECD, through the Office of the Arts, has partnered with MASS MoCA in North Adams, MA, to expand the organization's Assets for Artists program. The initiative will offer grants and professional development workshops to artists in Connecticut, primarily in under-served rural areas. The Northwest Connecticut Arts Council, Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition, and Windham Arts also are teaming up for this two-year pilot program.

"We are so pleased to be able to bring the well-honed services of the Assets for Artists program to Connecticut," said Kristina Newman-Scott, the Connecticut Office of the Arts' Director of Culture. "It's exciting to bring together such a broad-based partnership that focuses on supporting artists in areas that typically miss out on opportunities for business training and microenterprise investment."

MASS MoCA's Assets for Artists program was founded in 2008 with the mission to help artist-entrepreneurs achieve financial stability and business growth. Through Assets for Artists, MASS MoCA partners with various cultural organizations to bring its innovative programming to communities. The goal is to expand throughout the Northeast, and this partnership in Connecticut marks the first step. To date, the program has assisted more than 200 artists and invested more than \$500,000 in their creative businesses, and has delivered hundreds of hours of artist-focused financial and business training.

"MASS MoCA is thrilled to work with its fantastic partners in Connecticut to help provide professional development training and working capital mini-

grants to rural artists,” said Blair Benjamin, director of Assets for Artists. “It’s so exciting for us to see — over and over again — the tremendous talent and economic potential of artists in rural communities.”

For this pilot round, 10 artists will receive matching grants of \$1,000 or \$2,000 to invest in the expansion of their creative enterprise, along with professional development training, and individualized support with business planning to make the most effective business investments possible.

Financial support for the program is a combination of federal, state and private funds. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Business Development Grant program is providing \$25,000, \$13,000 from DECD, and \$5,000 from MASS MoCA.

“As a parent of young children, I know the value that art plays in the development of a child’s brain. And as a taxpayer, I also appreciate the economic benefit of the arts economy,” said U.S. Senator Chris Murphy. “Assets for Artists will bring unmatched opportunities to Connecticut’s artist-entrepreneurs and will help them get their creative businesses off the ground. I’m glad I could help make this program a reality.”

“Artists play a rich role in our state’s cultural and economic development—enriching and enlivening our communities. The Assets for Artists program will deliver financial support and business training for the most talented, creative and dedicated artists in our rural towns, an investment that rightly recognizes artists as entrepreneurs and leaders of our cultural economy. I will continue to fight for funding to support the arts in communities throughout Connecticut,” stated U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal.

“I commend Assets for Artists for the outstanding support they provide to an often underserved community. Art enriches all of our lives, and I am proud that rural artists in the First District and across Connecticut will have the opportunity to develop and grow their creative businesses,” said U.S. Representative John Larson.

“The arts breathe life into all communities and especially in our rural areas in Connecticut,” said Representative Joe Courtney (CT-2). “This unique Assets for Artists grant holds the promise to unlock the potential of artist-entrepreneurs to extend beauty and economic opportunity in the Windham region and in southeastern Connecticut.”

“We reach our highest potential as a society when we collaborate and do what’s best to support our most valuable resource – our people,” said Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty (CT-5). “Connecticut’s rural areas are full of creative individuals who can be developed into successful entrepreneurs with the right support. I applaud Secretary Vilsack, Commissioner Smith, and our local partners for their efforts to invest in our local artists.”

The application period for Assets for Artists is open to rural Connecticut artist-entrepreneurs until December 11, 2015. For more information about the program and its guidelines, visit the Assets for Artists website: [www.assetsforartists.org](http://www.assetsforartists.org).

###

Contact: Jim Watson  
Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development  
[Jim.Watson@ct.gov](mailto:Jim.Watson@ct.gov)  
860-270-8182 (office)  
860-306-3737 (cell)